

PRINCE BOOHOO AND THE DIVING BELL.

(Continued.)



EVERYTHING was quite still. The servants wore list slippers, the horses in the stable, which was close by, had their noses tied up in bags, lest they should neigh and wake the King. The only noise came from the chattering of the sparrows, which they couldn't silence, and the snoring of the King, which made all the windows in the palace rattle.

Meanwhile the Prince was sailing to the buoy which marked the place where the fairy was sitting at the bottom of the sea. They soon found the spot, for the fairy was so busy in her workshop down below, that quantities of chips floated up, and bubbles, which showed that she was talking to somebody. The sea was quite flat and oily all round the buoy, and so much seaweed and old rope lay about, that the screw of the steamer would not turn round. But that was of no consequence, for they wanted to stop there.

Then they got the diving bell out, and hung it over the ship's side ready for the diver to go down to the fairy with an autograph letter from the King begging her to undertake the education of the Prince, and fix her own terms. And the letter was sealed with a seal as big as a saucer.

But the Prince said he would let no one give the letter except himself, and took his seat in the diving bell so positively, that the Lords of the Admiralty dared not refuse him. However, he went faster than he intended, after all, for as he was sitting obstinately in the bell, while the Lords of the Admiralty were discussing in the cabin how they could best keep him out of mischief and themselves out of a scrape, the rope broke which held the diving bell, and it fell into the sea, splash, with only the Prince inside it, and was gone in a moment, like a stone.

The Lords of the Admiralty, hearing the splash, ran on deck. But what could they do? They fired a royal salute, and hoisted the colours half-mast high, and had the Dead March in "Saul" played by the band, and burst into tears, and threw their cocked hats into the

sea, and took up the buoy, and wrote a blue book, which they sent home by a ship that was passing, with a round robin to the King. Then they had a court-martial on the man who looked after the diving bell, and hanged him. Still they were afraid to return, and so they ran their ship on shore at a desert island, married princesses with rings in their noses, and lived among savages for the rest of their lives.

Meanwhile the Prince was wonderfully pleased. He sank and sank at a great rate. Strange ugly creatures, some all face and tail, some long and slippery, some round, with mouths full of teeth in the middle of their stomachs, and eyes like targets, some all spikes and prickles, some like jelly-fish, soft and slimy, as big as the dome of St. Paul's, came to look and smell at him as he went down.

Then he saw many old ships, wrecked long ago, but still not heavy enough to sink to the bottom. They moved slowly about, with long green weeds hanging to them, and skeletons looking out of their cabin windows. Some were very old, with high poops. These had skeletons in armour on their decks, with cross-bows in their hands. Some were mere hulls, some had their masts still standing, with fish swimming about through the rigging. One, lately sunk, and advertised as "Missing," had all its sails set, and hanging wet against the mast, a thousand fathoms beneath wind and storm.

The Prince began to be a little frightened as he passed by these, and the water grew darker as he sank further from the sun. He cried out once as he went close by one great ship, but there was nobody to hear or to help him.

At last he reached the bottom, with a great thump, which nearly knocked the breath out of his body. And all was quite black around him. Presently, however, he saw through the window of the diving bell a little speck of green light. It was the fairy taking a walk on the sand at the bottom of the sea. She had a lamp of phosphorus fixed in her hat, and was knitting something with long strings of seaweed. And she carried her little black stick under her arm. When she came near the diving bell the Prince cried as loud as he could.

"Surely," said the fairy, "I ought to know that voice." Then she touched the bell with her stick, and it fell to pieces, and the Prince got wet through in a moment.

“Ah!” said the fairy, “I thought it was Boohoo. Well,” she added, “and what do *you* want? There are no strawberries here.”

“Booohooo — sprtf—hrrach — Arrhshugh — Booooo-oo-o-o-o-o-ulgh — pheughrgprph!” said the Prince, who, when he opened his mouth to cry, was half choked with the water.

“What language is this?” said the fairy.

“Boorr gluphrrrarrch broof!” said the Prince.

“Spell it,” said the fairy, taking her note-book out to put down the Prince’s reply.

But the Prince could speak no more, and only crammed his handkerchief into his mouth and stared.

“I am glad you have stopped crying,” said the fairy. “That is well. You will soon grow used to the salt water. Now you must go to school. Come with me.” So they went to the school, which was built of glass, and held three hundred merboys or little mermen, and had a playground like a large aquarium, in which the boys swam about between lessons, and played leap-frog, which seemed to be their only game, in the water. But certainly they played very well. It is true that they fished, but then they sent their lines up above their heads, like kites, and drew the fish down, when they caught any, instead of pulling them up. The head master was an old merman with spectacles, a long green beard, and a tremendous tail, which he generally carried over his head like a squirrel, and waved about when he was angry.

Of course they couldn’t use ink in the school, so they wrote on oil-skin with small paint brushes. Their books had vulcanized india-rubber leaves, and were bound in gutta-percha. Their desks were made of coral, and they always had oysters for dinner.

The Prince found the lessons hard, but not so troublesome as the number of questions which the boys asked him. They wanted to know how people managed to live on dry land, and what there was to eat beside fish, and what fire was (for they had never seen it), and why, on earth, people did not believe in mermaids, since, with them, the cooks, and the housemaids, and the scullery-maids, and the dairy-maids, and the nurses, and the governesses, and the schoolmistresses, and the shopwomen, were all mermaids. They asked him, too, what water-rates were, and water-carts; and why the Queen was afraid of his getting his feet wet.

At last the Prince was so miserable that he made up his mind to run away from school. He thought to himself that if he walked straight along the bottom of the sea he would at last come out on dry land somewhere. The bottom was quite flat all round the school; but as, when he and the merboys had walked out two and two, he had seen nothing but grey sand with numbers of little shells upon it, he knew that he must take something to eat with him. So for a whole week, instead of eating the oysters he had for dinner, he slipped them inside his waistcoat. Of course this made him look fatter, but that was put down to the oysters agreeing with him. At last, when his clothes could hold no more, he set off one dark night when all the people about the school were fast asleep.

He had looked at the compass before he started, and had determined to go due east, for that he knew—at least such was the information given to him when he asked the question in the geography lesson—was the way to Weymouth. The teacher of the geography class had taken pains to show him, in the map, that Weymouth lay due east, and he knew that the sands at Weymouth were flat, so he thought he could walk out of the sea easily there. The master had no idea he was going to run away.

He set off due east. Presently he got rather puzzled, and meeting a crab, asked his way.

"Well," said the crab, "I would advise you to walk back again. I always do."

"But I can't, I dare not," said the Prince.

"Poor child!" said the crab, "then follow your nose."

So he felt his nose, but it pointed up. Thus he could not follow it, for he had no fins, and was obliged to walk along the bottom of the sea. So he gave up all hope of being guided by his nose, and sitting down, began to cry.

He had not sat long before a star-fish that was passing by stopped to look at him.

"I wish," said the Prince, "instead of staring like that you would show me the way to Weymouth."

"No, thank you, I'd rather not. I was there once with my brother, and some children picked him up off the beach and had him dried, which he found very uncomfortable."

"Well, then, will you point out the way?"

"It's there," said the star-fish, pointing. But as he pointed every way, the Prince was none the wiser. So he got up and walked on, crying, though he had not the slightest idea in which direction he ought to go. Presently he came to a great rope lying at the bottom of the sea. Surely, thought he, this belongs to some ship which I shall find if I follow it. But when he had walked all day, and was getting very tired, he found no ship. So after eating twelve dozen of oysters, he lay down by the rope to sleep, intending to follow it some way further the next morning. He had not laid himself down many minutes before he was startled by something which went by, whizz, like an arrow. Then came many more whizzes, sometimes in one direction sometimes in the other. The curious thing was, that along with these whizzes he seemed to hear a constant whispering, and presently made out some words that were said, though he could not understand what they meant, about exchange on gold, and cotton, and votes, with the names of a great many people he had never heard of in his life. Presently he was surprised to hear his own name. The whisper was, "King Starzungarturz to the President of the United States of America. Can you give me any information about H.R.H. Prince Bohoo?" Then a whisper came with a short phizz, for the President was not a man of many words—"No."

So the Prince learnt that he was lost, and asked a lobster who happened to be strolling by that way where he was, and whether he could tell him what these whisperings were.

"Bless my claws," said the lobster, "don't you know? Why, this is the Atlantic cable; and a precious fuss it keeps us in. What with the squabbles, and the compliments, and the business of the people at the two ends, one can't get a wink of sleep anywhere along the whole line. I've known hundreds, ay, I may say thousands of respectable families obliged to move house to get a quiet night's rest. There was one friend of mine, an oyster he was, and I'll be boiled if they didn't lay the cable right over his bed. Poor fellow! he never got over it—nerves shattered—saw him the other day, one side of his face quite drawn, and beard turned grey."

Then the lobster jogged off, and the Prince began to think that now, perhaps, he could find his way out. "I have only to follow the cable," said he to himself, "and I must come ashore somewhere." So he walked stoutly on for two or three months by the side of the rope until by

degrees the light began to grow clearer, and he could see black things passing over his head. These were the bottoms of ships. Presently he came to some nets and lines belonging to fishermen. He had thoughts of fixing one of the biggest hooks into the collar of his jacket, and thus getting himself drawn out, but he reflected that perhaps they might sell him at Billingsgate, and lay him on a fishmonger's slab with his waistcoat cut open, which would not be becoming to a royal highness. So he walked on. At last the sea got quite shallow, and he saw the toes of somebody who was walking out from a bathing machine.

Now it so happened that all the bathing machines had to be licensed, and the Grand Master of the Waterbutt in King Starzungarturz's court received the money which was paid for the licenses. Indeed it was his salary; and he got a pretty penny by this means, besides having free admission to all the bathing machines in the kingdom. This last privilege tempted him to bathe often, and as just then the court was at Weymouth, he was having a dip when H.R.H. Prince Boohoo caught sight of his toes, for the toes he saw were none other than those of the Grand Master of the Waterbutt.

I should say that the shore end of the cable was shifted to Weymouth while the court was there, for the convenience of the King. Well, the Prince seeing toes, took for granted that they belonged to somebody, and put his head out of the water. Directly he did so, the Grand Master of the Waterbutt recognized him, and in trying to make a low bow and a complimentary speech at the same time, half-choked himself, for he had waded in up to his chin, and couldn't dive. So the Prince walked out on the beach, dripping wet, as you may suppose, while the Grand Master splashed back into his machine, and scuffled into his clothes ready to meet him. But he was not quick enough, and thus the Prince found no one prepared to receive him. There was only a policeman, who ran off at once for a stretcher. But before it came, Queen Kissimforwoteverhedid, who was looking out of the window of her lodgings with a telescope, saw the Prince land, and first ringing the bell for Dr. Pilsandrux, ran down to the beach in such haste that she forgot even to put her crown on.

And the Prince had to take another powder, for he had grown as salt as a red herring.

And the Queen said to the King, "I told you how it would be if we let him go along with those lords; he would be sure to get his feet wet."

the moon for her to play with. For the jewels are lost beyond recall, and the wood is an enchanted forest."

"Nevertheless she shall be wed with my mother's ring," thought the soldier. But he kept his own counsel, and only waited till he had smartened himself up, before he sought an audience of the king.

His claim to the princess was fully proved; the king heaped honours and riches upon him; and he made himself so acceptable to his bride elect, that the wedding was fixed for an early day.

"May I bring my old father, madam?" he asked of the princess.


"That you certainly may," said she. "A good son makes a good husband."

As he entered his native village the hedges were in blossom, the sun shone, and the bells rang for his return.

His stepmother now welcomed him, and was very anxious to go to court also. But her husband said, "No. You took such good care of the homestead, it is but fit you should look to it whilst I am away."

As to the giant, when he found that he had been outwitted, he went off, and was never more heard of in those parts. But the soldier took his wife into the city, and cared for her to the day of her death.

A VOYAGE IN CLOUDLAND.

T was not a very fine day in June, for the sky was overcast, when I wandered down the streets of C——. It was a great day there. The queen's birthday was being celebrated, and it was a general holiday. The streets were filled with pleasure-seekers. The Volunteers of the town, with a somewhat noisy band in advance, created some excitement. Banners were hung out from many windows. Loyal decorations and inscriptions were abundant, all ready to be illuminated at night.

Such were some of the preparations. But on reaching a large common we saw a balloon being filled; and on coming near we found that it was going to ascend in the afternoon, and was to be managed by Mr. Coxwell. I at once made up my mind to go up, and having seen Mr. Coxwell, he agreed to give me a seat in the car. He said that he had been advised, on account of his health, not to ascend, but that his assistant was well qualified to manage the balloon. I went home, and

having collected together a few things, returned to the spot. Here the people were in great excitement. There was a crowd of about ten deep all around the roped enclosure. The balloon was full, and it seemed difficult to get within the magic circle. Hard pushing, however, and persuasive eloquence, were at last successful. Arrived there, I had time to look about me and to note the height of a thermometer and aneroid barometer, before Mr. Coxwell asked us to take our seats. The wind was rather high; but the balloon was sheltered from it by an enormous canvas screen. When we were seated in the car, the sand-bags which held the balloon down were loosened, and about half a dozen of them were taken into the car.

It may be well here to give some slight account of the management of a balloon. When the balloon is freed it rises by its own lightness, but it would soon reach a height at which it would neither go up nor down were it not for two contrivances. If you wish to come down, a valve is opened at the top of the balloon by a string, which, passing through the inside of the balloon, hangs into the car. If, on the other hand, you wish to ascend, some of the sand, which is taken up in considerable quantities, is thrown out, and this lightens the balloon. Another use of having sand is to throw it out on coming near to the earth so as to break the fall. The car in which the aeronauts sit is made only of wicker. The lowest part of the balloon is open, so that, even if there were no valve at the top, the balloon would still come down by the gradual escape of the gas. (In an ascent which Mr. Coxwell made the other day the valve did not work rightly, but still the descent was made without any accident.) If you wish to know whether the balloon is going up or down paper is thrown out, and you seem to rise above, or to sink beneath the pieces of paper.

But let us return to the scene of action. We were all seated in the car, five of us; a score of men were holding on to it in waiting for the word to let go, and now it seemed hopeless to get off without an accident. The crowds rushed in, every one wishing to have a finger in the pie. The enormous balloon, freed from the ropes, swayed backwards and forwards, and it seemed every moment as if some one must be crushed. However, after much shouting from Mr. Coxwell, and many blows from the policemen, the word was given and we rose above the cheers of the people. The first sensation was that the people were all sinking under us. Having returned their salute, we began to look

about us. There was something amusing to see the great town laid out like a map before us, and the sluggish river with its toy boats, winding out into the distance, and the roads with microscopic carriages slowly creeping along them. After having glanced at all this, and having recognised all the familiar landmarks, we looked back on the common we had just left; and truly it looked more like a ploughed field than a grassy common covered with a mass of human beings. We were now four thousand feet high, according to my barometer, and at a considerable distance from the town. It was the first time that any of us except the aeronaut had ever been in a balloon. The purity of the air, the novelty of the sensations, and the beauty of the bird's-eye view raised our spirits to the highest.

As has been before said, it was a cloudy day, and, in consequence, we had not a very distant view. We were now on the very border of the clouds; sometimes in them, and then again below them, playing a game at bo-peep with the landscape below. The manager of the balloon wished now to descend; but after a little pressing he agreed to go above the clouds. We threw out sand and rose rapidly. It was the same kind of sensation as passing through a mist on a mountain.

All at once the gloominess of the day vanished, and the bright sun appeared overhead. The suddenness of the transition made it all the more enjoyable. We rose up with walls of cloud towering on every side and soon got above them all. What was my astonishment, on turning my eyes in one direction, to see another balloon close by us with people in the car moving about! Was it possible that Cloudland could be plentifully inhabited by balloons? But it did not take long to see that this was but the shadow of our own balloon thrown by the sun on the clouds. Our actions were perfectly imitated by our rivals, making quite a second edition of the "Spectre of the Brocken." It is difficult now to attempt to describe the scene that lay before us. Having just left the cold and gloomy atmosphere of the lower world on a day worthy of November rather than June, we were transported into an upper world with warm and bright sunshine, not the smallest cloud in the sky overhead, which was of a blue rivalling in purity that of an Italian sky. Below us lay the white fleecy clouds almost dazzling in their brightness (for every cloud has a bright as well as a dark side), looking more like an undulating snow-field on the Alps than a mass of cloud, stretching away till, losing their brilliancy and unevenness in the distance, they resembled the sea, forming all round

us a most perfect horizon. In fact, so sharp was the horizon that it was difficult to believe that we were not drifting out to sea. Above the horizon, were some of the lightest cirrus clouds I ever saw, most beautiful in the delicacy of their form, and a few of them tinged with the purest pink of a summer's sunset. Add to this the shadow of our balloon to form a foreground, and, what was more gorgeous than anything, a glory surrounding the shadow of the car tinged with all the colours of the rainbow. It is not quite clear what was the cause of this, but it was certainly most lovely. Would that some painter with an impossible power of rapid execution, and a collection of colours of impossible purity could perpetuate the landscape—or I should rather say cloudscape! But even such a picture could not delineate the feelings which filled our minds. The highest sensations that a pure air can give were present, and there was something added by our position, poised as we were in mid-air a mile and a half above the ground, with nothing beneath us but that deceptive sea of clouds which looked as if they would surely stop our progress should the sun play the same trick with us as he did with the wings of Icarus. It was impossible to help speculating on our fate should we make that little jump over the side which seemed so simple. A rapid descent as far as the clouds; a vain attempt to lay hold of them; a still more rapid descent below at a pace somewhat inconvenient for pleasant breathing; a crash, and what then?—an advantage that Icarus had not, a paragraph in the newspapers, a fall perhaps well deserved for a flight above our sphere.

But let us stop speculating, and return to our story. We continued to rise, and the shadow of the balloon grew small in perspective, and the glory round our heads grew larger and fainter. How could this glory but suggest the lines of Shakespeare?

"Glory is like a circle in the water,
Which never ceases to enlarge itself
Till, by wide spreading, it reduces itself to nought."

By this time the barometer had fallen eight inches, which showed that we were about a mile and a half high. I constantly watched the barometer (for I had not ascended only to satisfy my curiosity). A gentleman had kindly volunteered to watch the thermometer, and it had fallen twenty-one degrees; but it was quite warm, for the sun was shining brightly, and the spinning motion of the balloon turned every side in succession to it, like a spit before the fire.

This was certainly an enjoyable moment. There is no unpleasant feeling in balloon travelling, no swaying, but a motion so smooth as to be unnoticeable. There is no dizziness. In fact, I am told that no one ever feels giddy in a balloon. Why should they? I do not suppose that the inhabitants of the moon (if there be any) are giddy when they look down on the earth; and we certainly felt as little connection as any Lunarian could with that busy, bustling, pleasure-seeking, money-gaining place we call the world. Our only regret was that we should ever have to descend below the clouds.

The valve is now opened, and we commence our descent. Taking a long and sad farewell of the enchanted place to fix it on our memory, we plunge into the clouds. We are soon below them, and it is with feelings of disappointment that we recognise Mother Earth. We are falling at a great pace, and the pieces of paper we throw out do not seem to fall but to rise rapidly. It would be dangerous to come down at this pace, and besides there is no good place for landing near, so we throw out sand to check our descent. We are now noticed by many people, some of whom stand and stare, and a few run in the direction we are drifting across country. The grapnel, a sort of anchor attached to the end of a long rope, is now thrown out; we are not far from the ground. The grapnel is caught in a ditch. The manager looks for a bag of sand to lighten our fall. We have used it all. We are falling very rapidly. "Be ready," he shouts. We hold on to the ropes. Crash! we are on the ground. "Stick to it!" he shouts, as some one was going to get out. Up goes the balloon again. The grapnel has lost its hold. The shock was so violent that the aeronaut has lost the valve-line, so we are flying at the mercy of the winds, without sandbags and without valve-line. We dash through the tops of a few trees. The grapnel is again caught. Down we come. One old man, stunned by the first shock, is lying on the floor of the car. There is only just time to raise him up when the words "Be ready" warn us of a crash and a shock. Up we go again; the grapnel has failed a second time. Away we fly till the grapnel catches in a hedge. Down we come. Holding up my old man we come down with a "Be ready" and a crash. Up we rise; but the grapnel is holding this time. Down we come with a second crash; and as we rise again a crowd of labourers lay hold of the rope in a long line, and after the next fall the balloon is held down and we get out. Climbing up the rigging the valve-line is reached, and the gas let out.

The curate of the place now came up, and asked another gentleman and myself to dine with him. After a glass of brandy the old man was quite recovered, except for a slight stiffness in his back. I went home with the curate hatless, torn as to my clothes, and with a bruised knee. Though it was an unusually rough descent, none of us were injured.

Thus ended the pleasantest hour and a half that I ever spent. The pleasure was doubtless enhanced by its being our first ascent. We had been an hour and a half above ground, in which time we had gone thirty miles in a straight line, and had been a mile and a half high. A good dinner made us ready for a walk of eight miles, and a drive of thirty, and we arrived in good spirits at C—— at half-past two A.M.

It is often said by people who never were in a balloon that it is not right to rush into danger and to tempt Providence. This may be all very true, but it does not apply to balloon travelling. Its very danger is its safeguard. The chances of fire may be slight, but the consequences would be so terrible that extraordinary precautions are taken, and some aeronauts will not allow any one to have even a match in his pocket during an ascent. It would be extremely awkward to be carried out to sea, and consequently aeronauts take great care that they know their position and the direction of the wind. The dangers that a railway train is exposed to are absent here. You cannot run off the lines, nor is there much fear of a collision. Even the possibility of being dashed to pieces on landing in a storm is not greater than when at sea in a ship. Mr. Coxwell has travelled in balloons as much as most men, and has been attacked by mobs on landing, but even he has had wonderfully few mishaps. He has been becalmed for a whole night over London, where he could not descend on account of the houses. He has landed in a country without hedges or ditches, when the grapnel would not catch, and when the car was dragged along the ground *through* stone walls by a strong wind, and the car getting filled with stones, his leg was broken. This is the only injury he ever received. The grapnel once caught in a telegraph wire and the rope was broken; but he landed successfully without a grapnel. Let no one, then, talk about running into needless danger; in going above the clouds you do not run into danger, but into a region full of new beauties of nature that cannot easily be forgotten.

GEORGE FORBES.